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# UA3/9/2 Journal to College Heights Herald

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Journal to C.H.H. 9/8/99  
Gary Ransdell



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LIU YUAN HOTEL

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Our WKU delegation has been in China for six days. Julie and I - along with Sean and Mrs. Houston and Dr. Wei-Ping Pan, our professor of chemistry - have had a most enjoyable and a very productive trip thus far.

On our first night in Beijing we had dinner with Mr. Niu Weilin, the Deputy Director ~~of~~ General of the Chinese Coal Ministry, ~~the~~ and Mr. Ke-Wen Jin, the president of China University of Mining and Technology. This initial meeting was very important because in China, most of the scientific universities are under the authority of Mr. Niu and the Coal Ministry. I did not realize how important coal as a natural resource is to China. It has been a blessing and, in recent years, a major contributor to a serious air pollution problem. This is one of the reasons they are so appreciative of our research at WKU. We immediately laid plans for future scholar (faculty and student) exchange programs and for the sharing of our research. Our first dinner also included representatives of the Leco Corporation with offices in Beijing and throughout the U.S. Leco made gifts to Western in recent years to create an endowment to fund scholarly exchange between WKU and Chinese universities. It was good to be able to thank them for financing much of this trip. Over the last 10 years, Western has hosted 37 visiting scholars from the Chinese Universities <sup>we</sup> will have visited on this trip.

The second leg of our trip took us to the city of Taiyuan (Tie-wen) and to Taiyuan University - a university similar to

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Western in size and scope. We were greeted by Dr. Ke-Chang Xie (Shae) and his family. His family is quite relevant in that his daughter, Ying, and his son, Wei, both have Master's degrees in chemistry from Western. Wei Xie is currently working in a Thermal Analysis lab in Ogden College at Western. Ying and Wei's spouses also have degrees from Western! The hospitality of Dr. Xie and his staff was exceptional.



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LIU YUAN HOTEL

Dr. Xie, who also serves as the Lt. Governor of Shaanxi Province (like Steve Henry in Kentucky), planned a memorable agenda for us. Following initial discussions in which we agreed to ~~future~~ exchange programs, we were introduced to the Vice Presidents, Deans and senior faculty of Tsinghua University. Using Dr. Pan as an interpreter, I made a presentation on American higher education and ~~about~~ about WKU, followed Dean Houston's presentation of our applied science programs. Dr. Pan later lectured to faculty and students on Coal combustion and thermal analysis.

The highlight of our trip, however, was Dr. Xie's invitation to participate in the opening ceremony for 4,000 new freshmen. WKU was well featured ~~in~~ in Dr. Xie's remarks. I <sup>was</sup> particularly honored to deliver a speech to the new students. I encouraged them to work hard and ~~represent~~ represent their country and their university well - and to come to WKU for graduate study!

In China all student - at all universities - begin their collegiate career with 3 to 4 weeks of military training before they begin classes. Therefore, all 4,000 freshmen were in military uniform. They were very attentive and most enthusiastic in their spontaneous response to many of my points. Dr. Pan also served as my interpreter in this ceremony.

The remainder of the day consisted of tours of their dining and residence halls (we have much to be thankful ~~for~~ for Western) and several of their research labs. Julie and Sue Houston met



with students and answered many questions about American culture, our campus and the habits of our young people.



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LIU YUAN HOTEL

I must pause here and describe the formal lunches and dinners which our Chinese friends hosted on our behalf. We've had noodles of every variety and fish prepared fresh - very fresh! Every meal is served around a round table with everyone using their chopsticks to dine on dozens of dishes served in the center of the table. We have been served beef, pork and chicken served in the most unusual sauces. We have also had to delicately ~~eat~~ sample tortoise, donkey, seaweed, scorpions (very crispy) and duck - lots of duck. As the guest of honor, I was given the privilege of receiving the tortoise shell - ~~the~~ edge of which was ~~particularly~~ particularly tasty! Our biggest mealtime challenge, however, is the Chinese custom of toasting, sometime during the meal, each person at the table. This is when we learned to pace ourselves! Failure to properly toast your hosts would be a cultural embarrassment to those serving the meal. <sup>Since we cannot drink the water, we often find</sup> ~~carbonated soft drinks, beer and wine to be the only~~ <sup>options.</sup>

Our third stop <sup>was in</sup> ~~to~~ the city of Nanjing. Immediately upon arrival, we were met by Dr. Wenxiang Zhang, from Huainan Institute of Technology, and two professors - both former visiting scholars at U.Kil. Huainan Institute is four hours from Nanjing and, while we could not visit their campus, we were honored that Dr. Zhang and his colleagues traveled to meet with us in order to consummate future exchange agreements.

The most impressive campus we visited was Southeast University located in Nanjing a city of 4 million people. Southeast is one of China's leading universities - currently ranked #8 in the national rankings of university status. Southeast has some of the world's leaders in technological research. We have received, at Western, four visiting scholars from ~~the~~ Southeast since 1990. Perhaps our most encouraging work was done



On this campus visit. We signed a "sister university" agreement. Included in that agreement is an exchange of faculty and students and a delegation visit to our campus in the Spring of 2000. This is particularly important because Southeast University ~~is~~ is home to China's <sup>one</sup> member ~~of~~ licensed Beil Coal Combustion technology - a technology which in which Western is particularly proficient. They will send their best scientists in coal technology, biotechnology, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> engineering ~~to~~ <sup>to Western</sup>. A ~~and~~ bonus was their interest in partnering with our business faculty. They have a particularly strong International Business program and they are interested in our automotive emphasis in international business. Fiat and Ford plants make Nanjing China's leading automotive manufacturing center. They like the clusters of automotive plants in and around Bowling Green.

At Southeast, I had the opportunity to have a Q&A session with a large group of undergraduate and graduate students. They wanted to know everything about our campus, how to apply and how our way of campus life is different. It is important to know that every student on these campuses would perform admirably in our graduate (or undergraduate) programs. Only 7 out of 100 candidates get into a university in China - even less on those campuses we visited. These students are extremely intelligent and driven to succeed. They have a near perfect graduation rate.

I must admit that I was far less aware of their



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system - and their language - then they were of ours. So many of these students and their faculty know much more English than I knew Chinese. I struggled with learning to say hello (Nee-how), please (ching) and thank you (Shay-shay)!

Our trip has ~~not~~ also allowed us to see some of China's magnificent history and architecture. We've climbed the Great Wall and visited Emperor's tombs and walked through the Forbidden City - a walled city for the exclusive use of emperors for thousands of years. We walked through Tiananmen Square and saw where Chairman Mao started a communist nation in 1949, and where ~~some~~ student protests were crushed in 1989. In just a few weeks, on October 1, China celebrates the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic. If we've seen unspeakable beauty and unthinkable poverty. We've seen a country making impressive progress and catching up with the rest of the world. For us at Western, we <sup>have</sup> seen great value in the exchange of scholarship and research which will pay dividends for our faculty and students for years to come.

I salute Dr. Wei-Ping Sun for his diligent work in organizing this trip. ~~and~~ <sup>he</sup> opened doors which we, or few other American universities, could not have possibly opened without his native insights. Western is fortunate to have such an internationally esteemed scholar.